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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
JANUARY 27, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for January 27, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. DIGITALLY EQUIPPED U.S. TROOPS TO NORTHERN FRONT (Milliyet) If the Turkish Parliament grants permission, 30,000 soldiers of the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division, the first digitally-equipped unit of the U.S. army, could enter Iraq through Sirnak's Habur border gate within days. The division is made up of three infantry, one airborne, and one engineering brigade. Airborne units have Apache and Comanche helicopters, while land units have M1A Abrams tanks and Bradley armored vehicles. The division, led by Major-General Raymond T. Odierno, has a rich history.

3. CONTINUED ANTI-WAR SENTIMENTS

Evrensel reported nationwide anti-war protests against U.S. preparations to hit Iraq. Thousands of people participated in these protests held in Mus, Batman, Bingol, Hatay, Amasya, and Sivas. Ahmet Tas, President of the Cukurova (Adana) Handicapped People's Association, expressed opposition to the possible U.S. operation against Iraq. "We do not want to see war-stricken people in Turkey and the world," he added. Turkiye quoted Kilis Governor Aslan Kutuk as announcing having taken all kinds of measures against a possible influx of refugees from Iraq, as well as chemical, biological, and nuclear attacks. In Hakkari, the Civil Defense Directorate has provided 145 personnel with two-month training on nuclear weapons that might be used in a possible war. Gaziantep-based Sanko Holding Company President Abdulkadir Konukoglu said he sided with peace and did not even want to articulate the word "war." In addition, "health tourism" from Iraq has declined almost to zero due to war rumors. Nearly 100 Iraqis had been given medical services in Gaziantep, to which no Iraqis came over the past two months. Asim Guzelbey of the Abdulkadir Konukoglu Medical Center said that under a protocol agreement signed between his hospital and the Olimpik Hospital in Baghdad, Turkish doctors and health teams had from time to time served in Iraq. He added that he had to cancel a January 22 trip to Baghdad due to these rumors. Mersin Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MESIAD) President Musa Timur opposed a possible war against Iraq because it would substantially affect the provincial economy. "Bombs dropped during the 1991 Gulf Crisis fell on Mersin as economic bombs," he reacted. Milli Gazete cited Felicity Party (SP) Elazig Provincial Women's Commission President Nazan Atasci as saying "We have no children to send to the front." Atasci characterized the possible war in Iraq as a dirty game of American imperialism and its search for hegemony. "It is not possible for those who for many years terrorized others, formed terrorist organizations, and fed terrorists to fight against terrorism," she added. Bolge quoted the Grand Unity Party (BBP) National Vice President, Turan Guven, as saying that "northern Iraq is too important for Turkey to be left to its own fate." The Diyarbakir Labor Platform issued a press release against war.

4. HUNGER STRIKES

Evrensel reported continued protest demonstrations in many provinces against the isolation of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and possible U.S.-led war. Twenty members of the Prisoners and Inmates Families Initiative started a six-day rotating hunger strike at the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) Kayapinar (Diyarbakir) office. In Siirt, twelve relatives of inmates told the HADEP

provincial organization that they had launched a two-day rotating hunger strike to protest isolation conditions in prisons. A pro-Ocalan protest was also held in Mersin.

15. NINE HIZBULLAH SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN MALATYA (Cumhuriyet/Turkiye) According to the Malatya Security Directorate, police arrested nine people, a woman among them, for providing support and shelter to Hizbullah members who had taken part in the 2001 assassination of former Diyarbakir Security Director Gaffar Okkan. The arrestees were accused of bringing the Hizbullah gunmen to Elazig and placing them in a Hizbullah safe house there. A pistol, a cartridge clip, six cartridges, as well as false ID cards, false passports, and organizational documents, were also confiscated. Officials determined that the arrestees had been trying to establish Hizbullah safe houses in Ankara, Istanbul, Elazig, and Malatya, carrying out organizational activities in mosques and schools, extorting money and raising funds for the organization. One of the arrestees had also been involved in the killing of a police officer in Elazig and preparing to travel abroad.

16. HADEP MAYOR ATTEMPTS TO DEMOLISH DIYARBAKIR MONUMENT (Hurriyet) Remzi Azizoglu, HADEP Mayor of Diyarbakir's Yenisehir central district Municipality, wanted to demolish that district's Sehitler Aniti (Monument of Martyrs), in line with a decision made by his municipal council. The State of Emergency (OHAL) regional governor's office had constructed the monument in Diyarbakir in commemoration of soldiers and security officers killed during the Anti-Terror Struggle in the region. The Diyarbakir Governor's Office blocked the mayor's demolition plans.

17. MILITARY VEHICLE OVERTURNS IN RURAL HAKKARI (Turkiye) A military vehicle carrying foodstuffs for Jandarma stations along the Iranian border overturned in Yuksekova (Hakkari) on January 26. One NCO was killed and five soldiers were injured during the incident.

18. TEN DEHAP/HADEP MEMBERS HELD (Turkiye/Evrensel) A Van court ordered ten Democratic People's Party (DEHAP)/People's Democracy Party (HADEP) members to remain in custody for violation of the Demonstrations and Marches Law. They were among 80 people, including women, who had been arrested for faxing messages to the Justice Ministry protesting the possible U.S. operation against Iraq and the isolation of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

19. ATTEMPTED BOMB ATTACK BY FORMER VILLAGE (Evrensel) Former village guard Zubeyir Kamal, who had three hand grenades on him, came to the Siirt Courthouse and threatened to pull the grenades' pins unless he was allowed to meet with the chief prosecutor. While police officers were trying to calm him down, several plain-clothes officers seized the grenades. Kamal had been hired as a village guard in 1991, but his labor contract was terminated in 2001.

110. MISSING SILOPI (SIRNAK) HADEP OFFICIALS (Evrensel) Three years have passed since the disappearance of People's Democracy Party (HADEP) Silopi (Sirnak) district President Serdar Tanis and HADEP official Ebubekir Deniz in January 2000. No information has been obtained about them since then. No progress has been made with regard to lawsuits opened by their families, who claim the assailants are known and call on the public to support for the case.

111. INVESTIGATION AGAINST TUNCELI JANDARMA (Evrensel) The Erzincan Felony Court reversed a decision by the Pertek (Tunceli) Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecutor's Office had concluded that there were no grounds for proceeding with an investigation launched against the Pertek Jandarma for the destruction of graves of two youths in a local village. The court sent back the file to the Prosecutor's Office and ordered the initiation of an investigation against the Jandarma.

112. ADANA AGRICULTURAL DIRECTOR SHOT

(Turkiye) Police officer Mustafa Akinci, together with his brother Kerim Akinci, shot Adana Agricultural Director Fikret Coskun twice in the leg in his office on January 26. Coskun had made a decision to transfer Mustafa's wife, an employee of the directorate, to another province due to a work-related problem. The Akinci brothers shot Coskun when they failed to convince him to withdraw his decision. The brothers were arrested by police officers, while Coskun was hospitalized. In his testimony, Coskun reportedly said he did not know his assailants and why had been shot. Meanwhile, Milli Gazete and Bolge reported that in fact Coskun had shot himself while cleaning his pistol.

13. "CHANGING FACE OF SOUTHEASTERN TURKEY" (Turkiye/Milli Gazete) In Siverek's (Sanliurfa) Karakeci village, which is home to 15,000 members of the district's major clans, families have traditionally requested dowries ranging from TL 20 billion to 30 billion (approx. USD 12,000-18,000) and kilograms of gold in return for their daughters eligible for marriage. Today, however, families look for such qualities as college degree in prospective sons-in-law. In the village, university graduates can marry young women without having to pay dowries.

14. SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND TEACHERS IN SEVERAL SE PROVINCES (Evrensel) Health services at the Mus State Hospital are stalling due to a shortage of medical personnel. The Hospital's Senior Physician, Dr. Mustafa Ates, said ten specialist physicians, ten general-practice physicians, and 54 nurses served at the 300-bed hospital. Ates stressed the need for another 50 physicians, including 20 specialists, and 250 nurses. In Tunceli's only state hospital, there are only five expert physicians specializing in internal diseases, general surgery, and gynecology, maternity, and pediatrics. That is, one specialist serves 20,000 patients. The Bingol Maternity and Pediatrics Hospital's computer-assisted Intensive Care Center is not operational due to a lack of qualified personnel. In addition, the Siverek (Sanliurfa) National Education Directorate said there was a shortage of teachers in all branches across the district. Parents called for the appointment of new teachers for these vacancies.

15. POSSIBLE WATER-BORN DISEASES IN MARDIN (Turkiye) In Nusaybin (Mardin), many State Water Works (DSI) officials were hospitalized after they had been "poisoned" by drinking water with which sewage had mixed. DSI officials carried out an analysis on a sample of the water coming from a 135-meter-deep well and found out that it was contaminated.

16. TWO HUNDRED KILOS OF HASHISH SEIZED (Turkiye) Syrian officials stopped a vehicle carrying three Turkish citizens at Syria's El Saleme border gate. During the search of the vehicle, the officials confiscated 200 kilograms of hashish and arrested the three. An investigation is underway to look into possible contacts in Turkey.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

17. STATE MINISTER TUZMEN IN GAZIANTEP (Turkiye) State Minister Kursat Tuzmen attended a celebration in Gaziantep to mark the 50th anniversary of the World Customs Day on January 26. In his speech, Tuzmen said he was planning to establish border trade centers and improve trade to the benefit of countries involved in it. "When our commercial ties with our neighbors have increased, this will create an excellent political platform, leading to permanent commercial and political relations. Instead of being engaged in other things and spending huge amounts of money on security by purchasing weapons, this region will ensure its own development. It will allocate money for health, education, research, and development," Tuzmen added.

18. ADANA-MALATYA RAILWAY SERVICES ON HOLD Evrensel reported that railway services between Adana and Malatya provinces have been suspended for

the past eight months due to negligence on the part of the Turkish State Railways Administration (TCDD). The newspaper criticized TCDD for failing to repair a damaged tunnel, which eventually resulted in the tunnel's closure.

19. TURKISH GREEN CARDS

(Turkiye) Necmi Kurt, President of the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation, an affiliate of the Tarsus district Governor's Office, announced having issued Turkish green cards for 19,864 of the 22,652 applicants in 2002. These cards are issued to low-income families who cannot afford to pay for medical services, to make use of medical services at State-run hospital free of charge.

HOLTZ